



Newsletter of the African Burial Ground & Five Points Archaeological Projects

UPDATE

Winter 2000

Vol. 3 No. 1

Update, the newsletter of the African Burial Ground Project, is published by the Office of Public Education and Interpretation of the African Burial Ground (OPEI), at 6 World Trade Ctr., U.S. Custom House, Rm. 239, New York, NY 10048. Tel. (212) 432-5707, Fax (212) 432-5920. Please send all e-mail inquiries to nyabg@worldnet.att.net. *Update* provides current information about New York City's African Burial Ground and its historical context. This publication is made possible with funds provided by the U.S. General Services Administration under contract number 2PCB-CM-97-0154.

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<i>and more!</i>	

HONOR OUR ANCESTORS, HONOR OUR PAST

Sherrill D. Wilson, Ph.D.



Presenting the stamp petitions: (l to r) Donna Harden Cole, Marie-Alice Devieux, Joe Haslip (from Sen. David Paterson's Office), Ayo Harrington, and Sherrill D. Wilson. Photo credit: Charris Walker

Dear Update Readers,

For more than five years the Office of Public Education and Interpretation of the African Burial Ground Project (OPEI) has worked to assist the former Federal Steering Committee's (FSC) goal to have a U.S. Postal Service stamp issued to commemorate the New York African Burial Ground. This stamp campaign was the brainchild of Richard Brown, a retired postal employee and FSC member.

This effort has generated more than 160,000 petition signatures from 50 states and 42 countries abroad. Twice in February 1995 and April 1996, the Postal Service's Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee (CSAC) has rejected this global imperative to recognize the contributions and achievements of enslaved and free Africans in building New York and the nation. Despite these rejections, supporters and advocates for a commemorative stamp have continued the drive to

(cont. pg. 10)

*"In all of us there is a hunger marrow deep, to know our heritage,
to know who we are and where we came from..." Alex Haley (1921-1992)*

➔➔➔ LETTERS TO THE EDITOR ➔➔➔

Dear Ms. Manfra,

I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to thank you for your presentation at P.S. 75. It was wonderful to have you share aspects of your profession with our students.

As you noticed, the students were taking notes and fully engaged in learning the different facets of anthropology and archaeology. Although there were six classes present, you were able to sustain the interest of all the students. Hopefully, new anthropologists and archaeologists will be among them. Again, thank you for coming. We hope to see you at OPEI one day soon.

Sincerely,
Phyllis C. Murray
Librarian, P.S. 75
Bronx, N.Y.

Dear Dr. Wilson and staff,

Thank you for the hard work and wonderful effort you are rendering to our ancestors and for the future. Each correspondence I receive from you is **CHERISHED!** What information and knowledge! After reading about some of the horror that has happened to us, I feel 10 feet lower, but when I see your effort and brilliance, I stand 10 feet taller. Keep up the fight and the good work.

Sincerely,
Faida Jackson
Jacksonville, FL

Dear Dr. Wilson,

On behalf of the FBLA (Future Business Leaders of America), we would like to thank your administrative assistant Jennifer Efthymious and your public educators Janet Dees and Shaniqua Maxwell, for a job well done. Ms. Dees and Ms. Maxwell were very hospitable and friendly when greeting our group.

Ms. Dees presented a very enlightening and professional slide presentation before the tour, and Ms.

Maxwell's tour of the African Burial Ground site was both interesting and moving. She was very helpful in getting us to understand what our ancestors must have gone through and how we should always honor and give praise to them for paving the way for us. Both women exhibited passion for the information they disseminated to our group.

It is organizations like yours that help educate and mold our youth into well-rounded, responsible, and informed adults. Thank you once again for your cooperation.

Sincerely,
Janice Kenyatta, Co-Advisor
Future Business Leaders
of America

WINNERS 2000 STUDENT WRITING CONTEST

College / Poetry

First Place: Sherrie Jacobs, Baruch College, CUNY

Middle School / Poetry

First Place: Michelle Cuevas, M.S. 75, Bronx, NY
Second Place: Johanna Heureaux, M.S. 75, Bronx, NY

Middle School / Essay

First Place: Tanisha Garcia, M.S. 75, Bronx, NY
Second Place: Morgan Yascoe, Northeast School, Montclair, NJ

Middle School / Short Story

First Place: Kamau Morris, Northeast School, Montclair, NJ
Second Place: Jennie Grayson, Northeast School, Montclair, NJ

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE POSTMASTER GENERAL

William Henderson
Postmaster General
United States Postal Service
Washington, DC 20260

February 11, 2000

Dear Postmaster Henderson,

Enclosed you will find the result of an international effort by thousands of volunteers to commemorate the lives of enslaved and free Africans and African-Americans who labored to build the United States. To date letters of support from 32 U.S. representatives and nearly 160,000 signatures have been collected from individuals in all 50 states and 42 countries and territories abroad to honor the 20,000 ancestors buried in the National Landmark New York City African Burial Ground. This effort represents the third time volunteers are petitioning for this important commemorative stamp series.

Rediscovered in 1991 when the federal government was preparing to build a new office tower, the African Burial Ground in New York City is now one of the few American cemeteries with National Historic Landmark status. It is also under consideration as a World Heritage Site.

While the African Burial Ground underscores the African presence in New York, it confirms African and African American investment in the advancement of American colonization in both the North and South. For example, there were individuals who labored all along the eastern seaboard as ship builders, navigators, construction workers, seamstresses, farmers, and business managers in the creation of northern cities. In fact, second only to Charleston South Carolina, New York had the largest number of enslaved Africans of any other English colonial settlement during the 18th century. Those enslaved Africans contributed skills essential to the country's early survival and without whom America's economy could not have flourished.

The volunteers envision a stamp series that would depict the lives of these early New York African and African American sailors, Revolutionary War soldiers, childcare

workers, cooks, etc. The tragic fact that 40% of those people recovered from the African Burial Ground are children who perished from hard labor, malnutrition, and disease merits a stamp honoring the lives of enslaved African children.

In the past, we have seen stamps honoring the heritage of Irish Americans whose ancestors emigrated from Ireland; we have seen those Holocaust survivors rescued by allied troops honored; however to date there has never been a series of stamps recognizing the lives of the twelve million Africans affected by slavery. Honoring the National Historic Landmark New York African Burial Ground would serve as a symbol to recognize all enslaved people of African descent.

We believe, that the issuance of such a stamp series will not only provide recognition of the efforts of these early African ancestors, but will also enrich the lives of all Americans.

Sincerely,



Sherrill D. Wilson, Ph. D.
Director

cc:

Richard Brown, Chair, African Burial Ground
Stamp Committee
Ayo Harrington, Friends of the African Burial Ground
Howard Dodson, Chief, Schomburg Center for Research
in Black Culture
Ronald Law, Regional Admin., African Burial Ground

United States Senate

Frank Lautenberg (NJ)
Bill Bradley (NJ)

United States Congress

Earle F. Hilliard (7th, AL)
Floyd Flake (6th, NY)
Eliot L. Engel (17th, NY)
Jerrold Nadler (8th, NY)
Eleanor Holmes Norton (DC)
Gregory W. Meeks (6th, NY)
Nydia M. Velazquez (12th, NY)

Continued on page 14

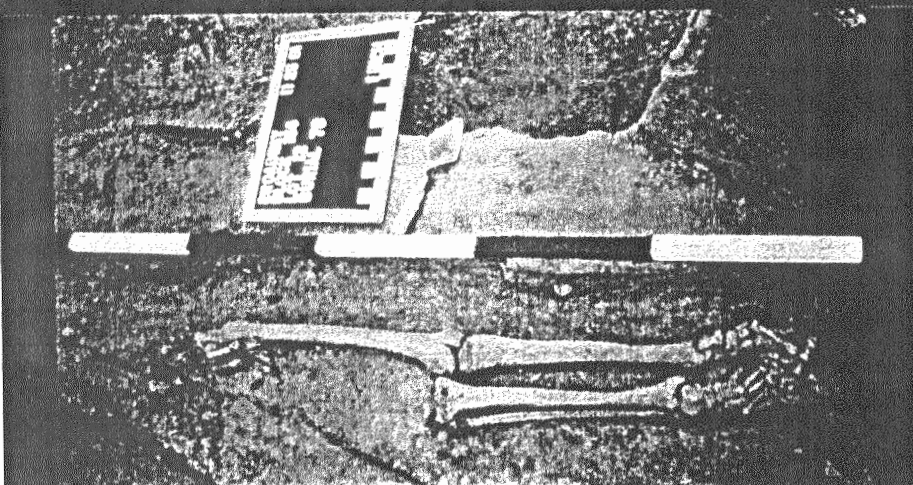
HOWARD UNIVERSITY UPDATE

Michael L. Blakey, Ph.D
and Mark E. Mack, M.A.
The Cobb Biological Laboratory
Howard University

The Status of Funding

A couple of months ago we were informed by the General Services Administration (GSA) that they had no funding with which to complete our research. This situation contradicted the repeated assurances of the GSA over the previous six months, that we would likely receive funding. In December the GSA offered to continue our contract without funding, but this empty contract was unacceptable. We had not received the funding we needed since the Spring of 1998 and had nothing left to work with.

Over the past two years, we took funds that were left for our least pressing needs (some supplies, equipment, and consultant costs) and transferred these funds to our most essential areas (salaries for the essential technicians, students and the office manager, etc.) Combining these adjustments with a great many volunteer hours by our researchers and directors (directors have been paid between 0 and 1/4 time over the



Burial #62/76 counted as two burials due to site disturbance.
Photo credit: The General Services Administration.

past two years in order to leave funds for junior technicians), we were able to stretch our project to the end of last year in the hope that funding would be allocated to allow us to complete our research. At least three budget proposals were requested by GSA during the past two years, which we provided, expecting the GSA to negotiate a contract. But they never did. The day after our contract ended, (February, 2000), GSA changed the locks of the archaeology laboratory at 6 World Trade Center, closing the laboratory. According to Ron Law of GSA, we at Howard closed the laboratory and refused GSA's offer of a contract.

When we were offered a contract that would require our researchers to work without any pay, scientific supplies, laboratory tests or other expenses, the project directors agreed to say "no more."

Apart from being reminiscent of the conditions under which our ancestors worked, it is simply impossible to do this kind of science without any resources at all. It seems better to make the situation clear for what it is, than to agree to a contract for an impossible job. Consider however that we have completed approximately 80% of the research with only about 1/2 of the budget we needed. The remaining "20%" of work to be done includes DNA analysis and other relatively expensive items.

Nonetheless, the scholars are continuing to analyze and write reports as private individuals, students and professors, in order to finish as much of the history of the enslaved Africans of New York as we can make time for, using the information currently in hand. But, most of us have had to

commit to other jobs that pay the rent.

Without funding, the GSA is basically unable to meet its legal obligation to provide the public with information about the Africans of colonial New York. In January, *The New York Times* reported that "By [the time reburial takes place] the African Burial Ground will have rewritten the book on slavery in New York and given historians something to talk about well into the next century." (Staples, 9 January 2000). *The Final Call* reported that "Breakthrough work by Howard University scientists may soon allow Blacks throughout the Diaspora to trace their genetic links to a specific African Village." (Shabazz, 28 December 1999, coverage headline). These achievements remain severely at risk despite our clear technical ability to make them happen. According to the *Times* article, "After protests from black New Yorkers, the agency [GSA] agreed to finance research on the skeletons, but failed to budget the necessary money and generally dragged its feet, putting one of the most important archaeological projects of the century years behind schedule." That puts it mildly.

A Final Count of Ancestral Remains

We have reached a new and final tally of the total number of skeletons from the African Burial

Ground that are being housed in the Cobb Laboratory at Howard University. As is usually the case, the most accurate count of skeletons can only be made once all cleaning, inventory and basic research has been done and every skeleton has been looked at several times.

"...the African Burial Ground will have rewritten the book on slavery in New York and given historians something to talk about well into the next century..."

Back in 1993 we began with what we called the "minimum number" (390), based on the number of skeletons for which field data had been collected during excavation.

We also counted the "maximum number" of skeletons for which there were in-situ (in place) field photographs and records (427) as an estimate of the amount of work we would have to do and the time it would take to complete our work.

Now that all of the actual remains have been carefully examined it has been determined that there are skeletons of **408** persons. The following describes why our maximum number (**427**) is different from the actual number of skeletons:

1. 15 skeletons that appear in the in place photographs were actually never excavated, but were covered in soil and left in place when Congress called for a halt to excavation in 1992.
2. One infant burial is still in a coffin we have left undisturbed in the laboratory.
3. One burial with two numbers (B#62/76) had been counted as two burials (see photo previous page).
4. One burial which appeared to have traces of skeletal remains from its photograph, only contained a soil matrix.
5. One burial thought to have human remains, contained only faunal (animal or food) remains.
6. **Note:** Although the total number of grave pits is 444, several held no skeletal remains. Either these individuals were never buried, or their decay was so advanced that only burial stains were left.

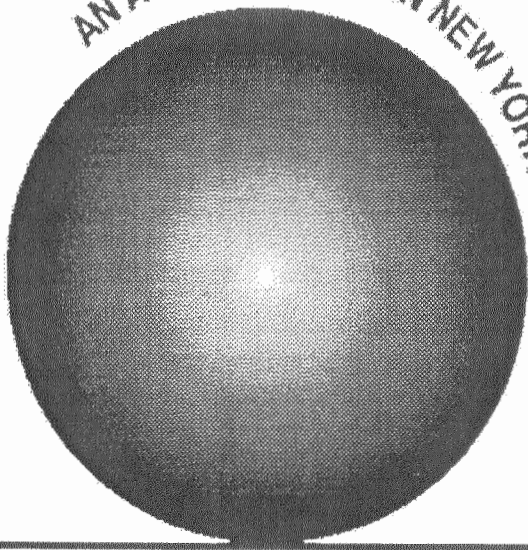
When one subtracts these 19 estimated burials from 427, the result is our final accurate count of **408** skeletons. The infant's coffin mentioned above, will of course be returned for reburial along with the other ancestral remains. All of the skeletal analysis has been sufficiently completed for reburial to take place by December 2000 as planned.



SANKOFA

"go back and fetch it"

AN AFRICAN BEAD IN NEW YORK CITY



Christopher R. DeCorse,
Ph.D

During a recent examination of the beads from New York's African Burial Ground, researchers were excited to discover that a bead associated with Burial 434* was likely to have been produced in West Africa. Some archaeological features, such as evidence for the use of beads around waists or distinctive burial practices, may be important indicators of continuities in African cultural beliefs. For the most part however, it was individuals and their ideas that made the journey from Africa, not African material culture.

Other beads from the African Burial Ground are European beads that were widely traded in both Africa and the Americas during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and could have been obtained by enslaved Africans after their arrival in New York. The fact that the Burial 434 bead is clearly of African origin makes it one of only

a handful of artifacts that suggest Africans may have brought a few, isolated, personal items with them across the Atlantic.

The Burial 434 bead had been initially identified as bone, but is actually a fired glass bead, likely produced in southern Ghana. Fired beads (sometimes called frit beads) are made from powdered glass.

While there is some evidence for indigenous glass manufactured in West Africa, fired glass beads from Ghana relied on the reuse of imported European glassware, beads, and bottles. Using this technology, glass fragments are pounded into a fine powder that is placed into fired clay molds. These molds have a small recess at the bottom into which a thin reed or cassava (manioc) stem is placed. During firing the stem burns away leaving a perforation or hole through the bead.

Firing is done in small domed ovens or kilns made of clay. After removal from the mold, the beads are shaped and smoothed by grinding. While this fired glass technology is found in other world areas, notably Mauritania, the characteristics and archaeological context of the Burial 434 bead make Ghana a likely place of origin.

The African Burial Ground bead is simple. It is opaque, whitish-tan in color, cylindrical in shape with a slightly off center perforation through the length of the bead. Using a variety of molds, different colors of glass and imported beads, African craftsmen were able to make beads with far more elaborate shapes and decorations. For example, some bands might be produced by placing layers of different colored glass into the mold, stripes were made by carefully inserting lines of colored glass down the sides of the mold, and intact European beads were incorporated into decorations.

This industry continued into the present century, and indeed our understanding of fired bead technology is primarily known through observation of twentieth century craftsmen. African bead manufacture has, in fact, experienced a revival during the past decade. In particular, beads made using this technology are still produced at the village of Asamang outside of Kumase, Ghana. While the modern manufacturers rely on imported colorants and electric grinders to shape the beads, the basic

technology of firing the powdered glass remains unchanged. Production remains relatively small with primarily local distribution.

African fired glass beads are virtually unknown in American contexts. The only other example uncovered thus far is from the Newton Plantation Burial Ground in Barbados (Handler 1997). Notably, this site produced a pipe and other beads that are very likely African in origin. Produced using the same technology, the Newton bead is similar in shape but slightly larger than the one from Burial 434. It is possible that other beads of African origin have been uncovered in American archaeological sites, but their distinctive characteristics have been unrecognized.

The occurrence of the bead in a possible eighteenth century context in New York is also exciting from an African perspective. Only limited finds of African made beads have been found in well dated archaeological contexts, including a handful of examples from southern Ghana, particularly from the site of Elmina in the Central Region (DeCorse 1989).

The African Burial Ground bead thus provides clues to the age of the fired bead technology. Excavated examples from southern Ghana date back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Regrettably, details of the archaeological context of the



Bead making at the Asante village of Asamang, Ghana. Clay molds filled with powdered glass lie in the foreground. In the background, a bead maker places the mold into a clay oven.

Photo credit:
C.R. DeCorse, 1986

Burial 434 bead and its associations with the burial itself are sparse. Burial 434 had just been exposed when the site was closed down in July 1992. The bead, the only artifact found with the skeletal remains, was found in the western end of the burial in a patch of mottled soil that may represent a disturbance. Thus, the bead may not actually have been directly associated with Burial 434 but an artifact related to another burial or activity at the site. It nevertheless still stands as an example of an African object that made the journey across the Atlantic.



Bibliography

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1989 "Beads as a Chronological Indicator in African Archaeology: A Re-examination." *Beads: Journal of the Society of Bead Researchers* 1:41-53

Handler, Jerome S.
1997 "An African Type Healer/Diviner and his Grave Goods: A Burial from a Plantation Slave Cemetery in Barbados, West Indies." *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 1(2):91-130

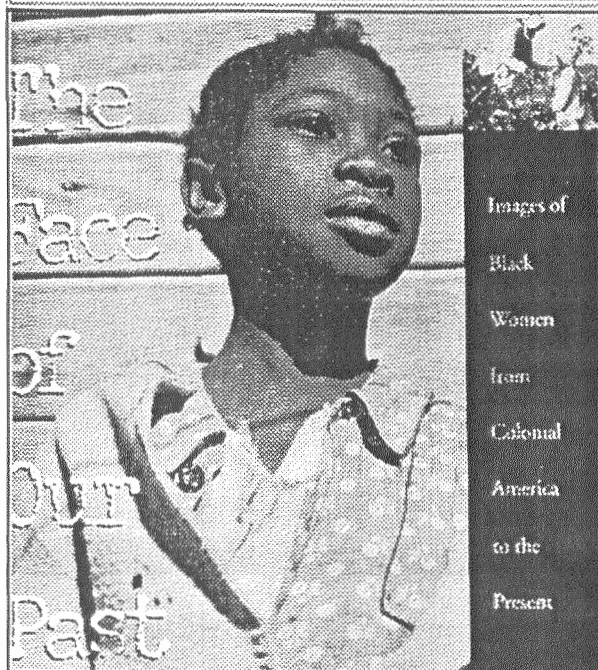
*(Ed. note: see this issue's Howard University Report for an explanation of the total number of recovered skeletal remains and grave pits).

DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS ABOUT THE
AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND PROJECT?

PLEASE SEND E-MAIL TO:

nyabg@worldnet.att.net

OPEI'S WINTER 2000 READING LIST



In celebration of Women's History Month, the majority of the books listed here are books that highlight, examine and depict the lives, hardships and contributions of African descended women. Newly released publications on this long neglected subject are impressive, and numerous. Enjoy and expand your knowledge on the subject of African descended women throughout the Diaspora!

Compiled by Sherrill D. Wilson, Ph.D.
and Arlette Miller Smith*

Cottman, Michael H. Spirit Dive: An African American Journey to Uncover A Sunken Slave Ship's Past. Three Rivers Press, 1999.

Diedrich, Maria Ed. Black Imagination and the Middle Passage. NY: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Diouf, Sylviane A. Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas. NY: New York University Press, 1998.

Dixie, Quiton Hosford and West, Cornel. Ed. The Courage to Hope: From Black Suffering the Human Redemption. Beacon Press, 1999.

Reid-Pharr, Robert F. Conjugal Union: The Body, The House and The Black American. NY: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Thompson, Kathleen and MacAustin, Hilary. The Face of Our Past: Images of Black Women from Colonial America to the Present. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.

Bronham, Robert James and Foner, Phillip S. [ed.] Lift Every Voice: African-American Oratory 1787-1900. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998.

Bush, Rod. We Are Not What We Seem: Black Nationalism and Class Struggle in the American Century. New York: WW Norton, 1995.

Collier-Thompson, Bettye. Daughters of Thunder: Black Women Preachers and Their Sermons: 1850-1979. San Francisco: Jorsey Bass Publishers.

Collins, Patricia Hill. Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.

Guy-Shiftwell, Beverly. Words of Fire: Anthology of Female Thought. New York: WW Norton, 1995

Harley, Sharon & Penn, Rosalyn Q. The Afro-American Woman: Struggles and Images. Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1978.

Hine, Darlene Clark, Brown, Elsa Barkley and Terborg-Penn, Rosalyn [Editors]. Black Women in America An Historical Encyclopedia, Volume 1 & 2. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Hine, Darlene Clark and Thompson, Kathleen. A Shining Thread of Hope: The History of Black Women in America. New York: Broadway Books, 1998.

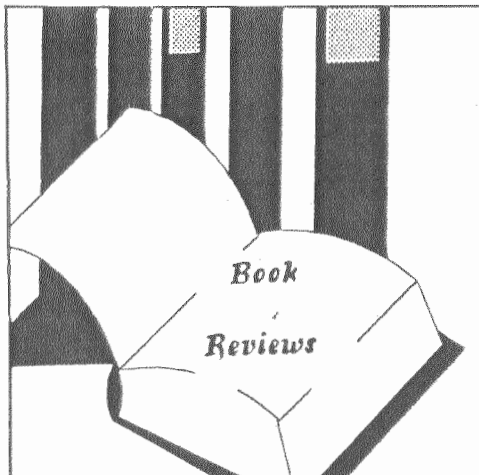
Hooks, Bell. Sisters of the Yam: Black Women and Self-Recovery. Boston: South End Press, 1993.

Jacobs, Bruce. Speaking Through My Skin. Michigan State University Press, 1996.

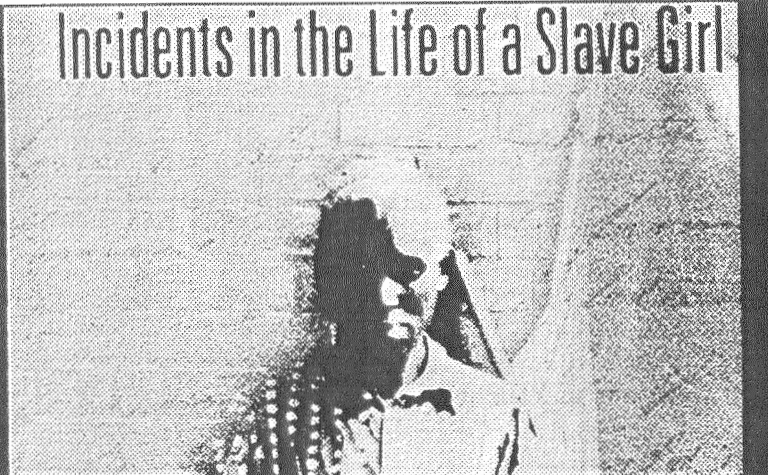
Jeffrey, Julie Roy. The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Antislavery Movement. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

Cannon, Katie G. Katie's Canon: Womanism and the Soul of the Black Community. New York: Continuum, 1996.

(Continued next page)



Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl



Book: Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl
Author: Harriet Jacobs writing as Linda Brent
 Introduction by Myrlie Evers-Williams
Publisher: Signet Classic
Reviewer: Sherrill D. Wilson, Ph.D.

"...the slave mother New Year's Day comes laden with peculiar sorrows. She sits on her cold cabin floor, watching the children who may be torn from her the next morning, and often does she wish they might die before the day dawns. She may be an ignorant creature, degraded by the system that has brutalized her from childhood; but she has a mother's instincts, and is capable of feeling a mother's agonies (Jacobs, 1861:13)."

Rare indeed are narratives depicting the lives and experiences of 19th century enslaved African American women. Harriet Jacobs' autobiographical account writing as Linda Brent is a moving and painful story of a young woman who hides for seven years in a six foot by nine foot garret to escape the unwanted abuses and sexual advances of her "master." Her eventual escape from the bondage of North Carolina, to New York City is recounted in this effort to expose the travails of her attempts to reunite with her family and assume a life of a free person, living in a state that honors the fugitive slave laws of the South.

"The reader of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* is taken on a personal odyssey through the most horrific and uncivilized period of American History from the viewpoint of a female slave. What makes *Incidents* exceptional to any other slave narrative is that, with the hesitant and apologetic voice of an enslaved black woman, the story expressly deals with racism and sexism. Both acts are manipulated through the mechanics of 'legal slavery.' The resulting consequences from this demoralized institution have continued to divide the black and white races in America, even to this day (Evers-Williams: 2000:v)."



Continued from page 8

Omolade, Barbara. The Rising Song of African American Women. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Thompson, Kathleen and Mac Austin, Hilary[Ed.] The Face of Our Past: Images of Black Women from Colonial America to the Present. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.

Wade-Gayles, Gloria. My Soul is a Witness: African American Women's

Spirituality. New York: Beacon Press. 1995.

White, Debra Gray. Too Heavy a Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves, 1894-1994. New York: WW Norton, 1999.

Smith, Barbara. The Truth Never Hurts: Writings on Race, Gender and Freedom. New York, 1998.

*Arlette Miller Smith is an Associate Professor at St. John Fisher College in Rochester, New York.



African Burial Ground Update

Compiled by Janet Dees

❑ Film Festival

On Saturday, February 12, 2000 OPEI held its annual Black History Month Film Festival. The Festival was an overwhelming success with over seventy people in attendance. For future OPEI events please see the calendar on the adjoining page. Be sure to call the OPEI to make reservations for these events. This will ensure that we can comfortably accommodate all of those who want to attend our programs.

❑ OPEI Staff Changes

Since our last issue there have been some changes to the OPEI staff. OPEI would like to say thank you to the following staff members, who have left, for their dedication and service. We would like to wish them the best of luck in all of their future endeavors:

Emilyn Brown	Chadra Pittman
Marie-Alice Devieux	Rahson Thorn
Deinabo George	Leona Schuler
Allison Manfra	

We would also like to welcome the following new staff members:

Shemetra Carter,	Public Educator
Jean Cerasale,	Historical Researcher
Janet Dees,	Public Educator
Jennifer Efthymious,	Administrative Assistant
Abiodun Harris,	Public Educator
Shaniqua Maxwell,	Public Educator
Charris Walker,	Administrative Assistant

❑ Stamp Campaign Thanks!

OPEI would like to thank ALL volunteers and supporters who donated their time and energy to the African Burial Ground Commemorative Stamp Campaign. Without your efforts the campaign would not have reached the level that it has. If you would still like to submit petitions or letters of support, please send them to:

William J. Henderson,
Postmaster General
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza, NW
Washington D.C. 20260

☞ PUBLIC EDUCATORS WANTED ☞

OPEI is currently looking to hire part-time public educators. Please send resumes with letters of interest to:

Dr. Sherrill D. Wilson, Director
The Office of Public Education & Interpretation
of the African Burial Ground Project
6 World Trade Center, Room 239
U.S. Customs House,
New York, NY 10048

Continued from Page 1

collect signatures from people of all ages, races and nations.

On Friday February 11, 2000 on the steps of the main branch of the New York City Postal Service at 33rd Street, OPEI representatives, African Burial Ground Volunteers and Friends of the African Burial Ground members, submitted 75,000 signatures to the postal representatives to be forwarded to the Postmaster General and CSAC to support this historic effort. The petitions were received by two postal representatives: Diane Todd, Manager, Public Affairs and Communication and Pat McGovern, Government Affairs. Also on hand during this historic event were Joe Haslip, a representative of NY State Senator David Paterson, long time supporter and advocate of the African Burial Ground Project; OPEI Stamp Campaign Coordinator, Marie-Alice Devieux, Friends of the African Burial Ground chair, Ayo Harrington and members of the press. The letter to the Post Master General which accompanied the parcels appears on page 3 of this issue of *Update*.

All *Update* readers and supporters should not hesitate to send their own letters of support. "We maintain that our ancestors and their contributions deserve to be recognized by the issuance of a commemorative stamp series, and these 160,000 signatures attest to that claim," surmised Ayo Harrington, Friends of the African Burial Ground.



ARE YOU ON OUR MAILING LIST?

Please submit your name and/or corrections to:

OPEI, 6 World Trade Ctr.,
U.S. Custom House, Rm. 239,
New York, New York 10048
Tel. (212) 432-5707 Fax (212) 432-5920

NY African Burial Ground Project

Year 2000 Saturday Calendar of Events



Office of Public Education & Interpretation
6 World Trade Center, Room 239
U.S. Custom House
New York, NY 10048

Dr. Sherrill D. Wilson, Director

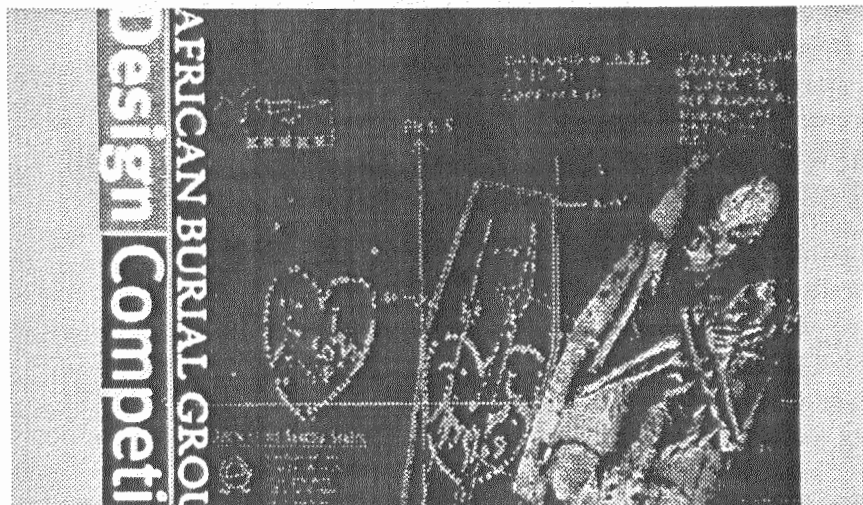
Volunteer Training	January 8, 2000
Film Festival	February 12, 2000
Annual Youth Symposium	March 25, 2000
GSA Public Update	April 15, 2000
Volunteer Training	April 29, 2000
OPEI Open House	May 20, 2000
Film Festival	June 17, 2000
OPEI Open to the Public	July 15, 2000
Summer Educators Symposium	August 12, 2000
Film Festival	September 16, 2000
Volunteer Training	October 21, 2000
Fall Educators Symposium	November 18, 2000
Kwanzaa Film Festival & Site Tour	December 30, 2000

All events begin at 12:00 Noon, are free to the public and require reservations

**For Reservations & Information regarding
locations Please Call: 212-432-5707**

Memorialization Update:

From the Office of Project Executive Peggy King Jorde



Brochure distributed by the Memorialization Office
design by S&S Graphics, Inc. New York City

"Ring Shout Performance Series" February, 2000 Program a

Success. The African Burial Ground Memorialization Office presented four free lunch hour concerts on each Wednesday in February. The African Burial Ground Ring Shout Performance that took place on Wednesday February 2nd was followed by performances on February 9, 16 & 23.

Performances commenced at 12:15 PM in the lobby rotunda of the Federal Building at 290 Broadway (corner of Duane Street) two blocks north of City Hall. Performances featured Jazz artists such as the Henry Warner Duo and Roy Campbell Trio; Classical / Brazilian guitarist, Don Witter Jr., and performing traditional African instruments, the Spirit Ensemble Trio.

The Office of Memorialization was pleased that the MTA Arts for Transit Program became a partner in our February program honoring New York African Ancestry. Our other partners for the February

Performance Series included the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society, New York Chapter and our sister office, The Office of Public Education and Interpretation.

Contractor Selected to Build Interpretive Center. IDI Construction Company Inc; of Manhattan was selected by the General Services Administration (GSA) to construct the African Burial Ground Interpretive Center. GSA made this decision in consultation with a distinguished panel of African American historians and exhibit designers, following a lengthy public participation process that produced five finalists last year.

Peggy King Jorde, Director of the Office of Memorialization states that "The Interpretive Center will be a unique exhibit environment facilitating for generations of America's African descendants and the larger community, an understanding of the cultural, historic, and scientific findings, while also acknowledging the important contemporary civic

movement largely credited with preserving this site." The 2,000 square foot center will be located within the Federal building at 290 Broadway. A separate contest for the Exterior Memorial is being conducted. The finalist for that contest is anticipated for later this year. [Ed. note: See GSA Update page 14]

"Homegoing Initiative" NCBM Signs Resolution To Partner. On December 13, 1999, The National Conference of Black Mayors (NCBM) has signed a resolution to partner with the Office of Memorialization on the upcoming "Homegoing Project." The "Homegoing Project" promises to engage the national and international descendant community in the design and crafting of burial vessels for more than 400 ancestral remains. The National Conference of Black Mayors is the ideal resource for helping us to identify and engage the most diverse and historically significant descendant communities to participate in this effort.

If you or your guild, club, organization or corporation is interested in a "Partnership with the African Burial Ground Memorialization" efforts, we invite you to contact us at:

African Burial Ground Project
Office of Memorialization
26 Federal Plaza, Suite 1605
New York, NY 10278
212-264-6949.

Join us! Become a partner and provide us with your contact material. Let us know who you are! Many thanks to you who have already expressed an interest in "partnering" on Memorialization efforts.

◆◆◆

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION UPDATE

Ronald Law
Associate Regional Administrator
African Burial Ground Project

I am pleased to provide *Update* readers with this report on the status of GSA's African Burial Ground efforts. The General Services Administration (GSA) is committed to completing this project and has spent or committed \$21.6 million to date on scientific research, the Office of Public Education & Interpretation (OPEI) and the Memorialization Project. The agency currently has sufficient funds for the Memorialization and Office of Public Education & Interpretation (OPEI) activities through Federal Fiscal Year 2000. The scientific research component of the project continues to be underfunded, however GSA has mounted an effort to pursue alternative funding sources from other government resources. The following is an overview and a summary status of the project.

❖ **Project Scope:** As previously noted, GSA has reached consensus on complying with the full scope of work as described in the 1993 Research Design, contingent upon receipt of additional necessary funds required to complete this expanded activity as described in the Research Design. As a result and in accordance with the leadership of our expert consultants, GSA has adjusted and accelerated our plans accordingly.

❖ **Funding:** Despite GSA efforts and its commitment to completing the African Burial Ground as a world class, national historic asset, an urgency exist for identifying new funding. An infusion of new funding will permit timely completion of the project objectives as well as the ability to maintain current schedules. Based on consultation with our three experts, Dr. Blakey, Dr. Wilson and Ms. Peggy King-Jorde, GSA has identified \$13.5 million needed for additional research and an expanded memorialization effort. GSA is committed to pursuing these additional funds, since they are essential to the successful completion of the project.

While our attempts to identify sources of immediate funding to continue the scientific research have so far been unsuccessful, GSA will continue to pursue other alternatives to seek funding from other governmental sources. We do recognize the importance of concluding this effort promptly and meeting our commitment to complete the project within the full scope of the 1993 Research Design.

❖ **Schedule:** In accordance with the leadership direction of our expert consultants, GSA has been able to improve on our schedule, particularly as it relates to the memorialization and reinterment. GSA is now reflecting a capability of conducting a reinterment as early as December 2000, in lieu of our previous projection of Fall 2002. However this is contingent upon the determinations of the recently formed Committee for Reinterment. This is also contingent upon substantial completion of the scientific research, particularly the artifacts, so that the human remains and artifacts are both available in time for the ceremony. We do have sufficient funds to continue the activities for the memorialization effort, which will allow us to maintain our current schedule.

❖ **Scientific Research:** Dr. Blakey, the Project Research Director, has provided GSA with a report summarizing the current status with regard to Archaeology, History, and Skeletal Biology. Dr. Blakey has also indicated that the scientific research on the skeletal remains is substantially complete, however research still has to be conducted on the artifacts. Dr. Blakey has provided GSA with an outline of his plan for deliverables through completion of the scientific research. Unfortunately, any delay or lack of funding for the additional scientific research will have an adverse impact on the Memorialization and Reinterment schedule.



➤ **Memorialization:** Ms. King-Jorde, the Project Executive for Memorialization, has submitted to GSA an outline and the concept for the memorialization which includes an Interpretive Center, memorial construction and a reinterment ceremony. All of these activities are currently funded. The Interpretive Center is in its final phase of procurement, and an announcement regarding the winning team is anticipated at the end of February, 2000. It is anticipated that the design and construction of the center will be completed in approximately one year following the selection [Ed. note See *Newsflash* this page].

➤ **Public Education and Outreach:** GSA has also increased its outreach with a number of meetings and on-going dialogues with several community groups and local officials over the past few months. They include the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, The Advisory Task Force established by Congressman Rangel, The Friends of the African Burial Ground, and The Committee of Descendants of the Afrikan Ancestral Burial Ground. GSA has also initiated holding semi-annual public meetings commencing with our first at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture on October 2, 1999. Overall, GSA has achieved its goal of reaffirming our commitment to the overall scope, and reaching consensus on a plan for the African Burial Ground Project. We will continue to attempt to engage all other segments of the community, including the responsible local officials. GSA's next public meeting is scheduled for April 15, 2000, with monthly OPEI activities scheduled in the interim.



**GSA's next Public Forum will
be held on Saturday, April 15, 2000**

@ 26 Federal Plaza, NYC

Call (212) 264-2100 or

OPEI (212) 432-5707

for further details

NEWS FLASH!

CONTRACTOR SELECTED TO BUILD INTERPRETIVE CENTER

IDI Construction Company Inc. of Manhattan was chosen to construct the African Burial Ground Interpretive Center. The IDI Team consists of the following personnel:

- Architects and Designers: Jacqueline Hamilton, Paula Griffith, Atim Annette Oton, Jasper Whyte.
- Engineering: Hardie and Associates
- Researchers: Dr. A.J. Williams-Myers, Dr. Lee Baker
- Exhibition Designer: Deirdre Scott Multimedia and CAD: Kinetic Media Inc.
- Artist: Phillip Bailey
- Marketing and PR: Elizabeth Geary-Archer

Trevor Prince, Executive Vice President of IDI states: "Our concept for the African Burial Ground Interpretive Center 'journey' symbolizes the physical movement and cultural dispersal that defines the African Diaspora. It unfolds in four phases: birth, maturity, death, and rebirth; which are represented architecturally in four containers: orientation, studio, transformation and reclamation."

[Ed. note: See Memorialization update, pg.12]

Continued from page 3

New York State

Comptroller

H. Carl McCall

Clarence Norman, Jr. (43)
Roger L. Green (57)
Helene E. Weinstein (41)
Rhoda S. Jacobs (42)

The New York State

Senate

Nellie Santiago (17)
David Paterson (29)
Martin Connor (25)
Alton R. Waldon Jr. (10)

The New York City Council

Victor Robles (34)
Julia Harrison (20)
Walter McCaffrey (26)
Lloyd Henry (45)
Ronnie M. Eldridge (6)
Bill Perkins (9)
Margarita Lopez (2)
Annette M. Robinson (36)
Juanita E. Watkins (31)

The New York State

Assembly

William Scarborough (29)
Edward Griffith (40)
Aurelia Greene (77)
Steven Sanders (63)
Catherine T. Nolan (37)

THE POETRY CORNER:
DON'T UNDERESTIMATE
THE POWER OF
THE SPIRIT

Wajeedah Anderson Beyah
 OPEI Volunteer

We are mothers
 We are mothers
 So your son is my son
 Is my son your son?
 Your child is my child
 All joining hands as one
 Don't underestimate the power
 of the spirit

With tracks of the Egyptian
 souls walking on the steps of
 the pyramids
 Reclaiming and claiming
 all.....
 Hollywood making movies
 Poking fun of ancient mummies
 no shame
 Don't underestimate the power
 of the spirit

With mothers rocking the limbs
 of the trees
 Shaking their sons' soul on the
 leaf
 Don't underestimate the power
 of the spirit

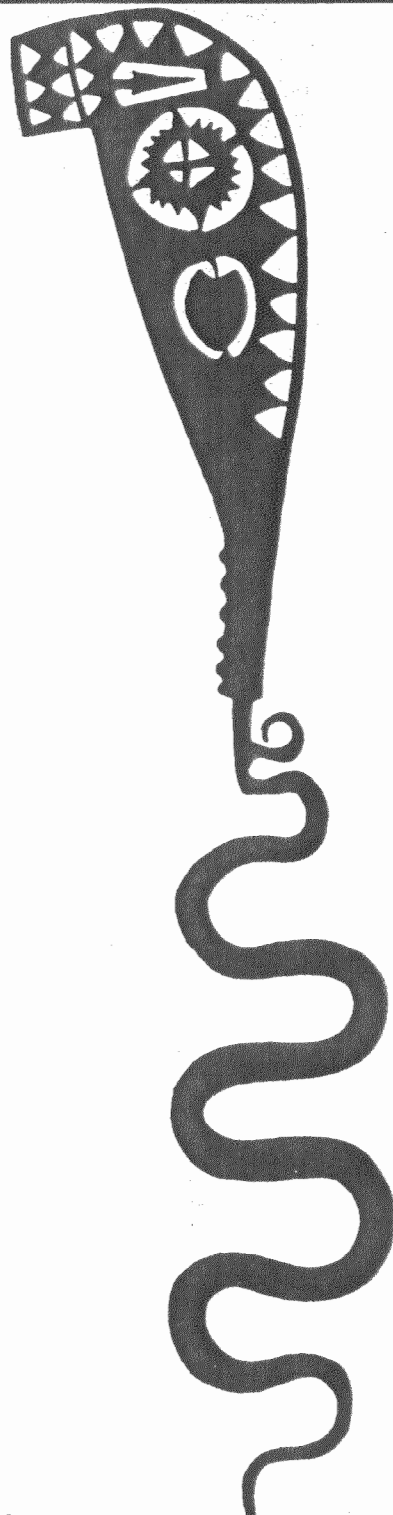
Native Africa
 Sweet Africa
 Joining hands with the dead
 slaves from your forefathers
 To the enslaved Africans of
 the 20th century
 To the enslaved Africans of the
 21st century
 Don't underestimate the power
 of the spirit

Police Brutality
 41 shots
 WBS.....Wearing Black Skin
 A mother's cry
 He's my son
 My son
 Don't underestimate the power
 of the spirit
 Helter Skelter joining in on the
 dance of the tornado
 Volcano eruptive
 Don't underestimate the Power
 of the spirit

African poets hung in Africa
 Journalist killed
 Sons shot
 Mothers crying
 Sisters crying
 Dry your eyes
 Don't underestimate the Power
 of the Spirit
 Don't underestimate the Power
 of the Spirit

Time to fight
 Time for peace
 No more bullets
 Mothers fight
 Families fight
 Keep silent no more
 Keep uneducated no more
 Love your son
 Love your child
 Love yourself
 No more blood must be shed
 Don't underestimate the power
 of the spirit
 Don't underestimate the power
 of the spirit
 Of the Spirit
 Of the Spirit
 Spirit.....
 RISE!!!!!!!!!!

Asante (peace)



IN THE NEXT ISSUE
OF UPDATE:

- ▼ Media Representations
 (Part II of V)
- ▼ Winning Student Writing
 Competition Entries



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of the African Burial Ground
U.S. Custom House
6 World Trade Center, Rm. 239
New York, N.Y. 10048

ADDRESS

